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ABSTRACT

This book presents a history of writing instruction outside general composition courses in American secondary and higher education, from the founding of the public secondary school system and research universities in the 1870s through the spread of the writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) movement in the 1980s. The book examines the ways writing was taught in the myriad curricula that composed the varied structure of secondary and higher education in modern America. It begins with the assertion that, before the 1870s, writing was taught as ancillary to speaking, and that, as a result, formal writing instruction was essentially training in handwriting, the mechanical process of transcribing sound to visual form. From this point, the book examines academic writing, its origins and its teaching, from a broad institutional perspective. It looks at the history of little-studied genres of student writing such as the research paper, lab report, and essay examination. Tracing the effects of increasing specialization on writing instruction, the book notes how two new ideals of academic life, research and utilitarian service, shaped writing instruction into its modern forms. Finally, it presents the history of the current WAC movement, providing a study of the long tradition of other WAC efforts with an analysis of why they have wanted. Twenty-three pages list references. (Author/RS)

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